

Environmental and Community Health Services

Food Hygiene Advice

for Domestic Cake Making Businesses

This leaflet aims to simplify the food hygiene related legal requirements for small home-based cake making businesses.

Please read through the leaflet thoroughly and then use the checklist at the end to help you meet food safety requirements.

The leaflet only addresses food hygiene related legislation and is not concerned with alcohol licensing, street trading, planning permission requirements, public liability insurance or tax requirements.

Legal Requirement

If you are handling or preparing food at home as a business venture you must comply with food hygiene and food safety requirements in order to produce, supply and sell safe food. This means that you might be a “food business operator”.



The Food Business Operator (FBO)

is the natural or legal person responsible for ensuring that the requirements of food law are met within the food business. The FBO must register the food business with the local authority environmental health service at least 28 days before opening. If you use several premises you may need to register them all. Registration is free but you must report significant changes such as a new FBO or an expansion of the business.

Your food business may be visited by an Environmental Health Officer who enforces food safety law. This could be a routine inspection, in response to a complaint, or in connection with an outbreak of food poisoning.

Separation

The most important hygiene aspect of home catering is separation. Keep raw animal products (meat, poultry and eggs) away from ready-to-eat food (food which will be eaten without cooking such as cooked meat or cakes).

Try to separate domestic food preparation from commercial food preparation.

Most cake making ingredients are low risk foods and they can easily be contaminated by “domestic food” such as raw meat. There are several ways to separate foods in order to avoid cross-contamination:

- Spatial/physical separation – domestic and commercial food preparation in different areas and/or using different equipment and utensils.
- Temporal separation – domestic and commercial food preparation at different times of the day. Complete your household duties and then thoroughly clean and disinfect surfaces, equipment and utensils before commercial food preparation.
- Barrier separation – Keep pets and children out of food preparation areas and keep a tight control over contamination points such as sinks, work surfaces and utensils. Cover all commercial food and keep it in separate drawers or containers in the fridge.





Hand washing

Effective hand washing is the first principle of safe food handling. Other hygiene controls for the prevention of cross contamination will be useless if people do not wash their hands properly.

Hand washing technique

- Rinse hands to remove food debris etc
- Add antibacterial soap and hot water
- Scrub hands all over, under fingernails and between fingers.
- Rinse and repeat if necessary
- Dry hands thoroughly - ideally on a disposable hand towel
- Use a clean hand towel to turn off the tap to avoid re-contaminating your hands.

Hand wash basins must have hot water, soap (ideally anti-bacterial) and clean hand towels. Ideally a hand wash basin should only be used for washing hands. If this is not possible in the food preparation area then make sure sinks are cleaned and disinfected regularly, particularly the tap handles.

Hands should be washed

- After touching your face or your hair.
- Before entering a food preparation area.
- Before touching ready-to-eat foods.
- After visiting the toilet.
- After handling raw animal products.
- After contact with children or pets.
- After touching waste bins.
- After cleaning.

Ideally, use different sinks for washing hands and for washing food, utensils and equipment. If a sink is intended for dual use it needs to be cleaned and sanitised as you go. Bins should be “hands free” to avoid contaminating your hands every time you touch the bin. Pedal operated bin lids are preferable as uncovered bins attract pests.

Long sleeves can be a contamination risk. Roll your sleeves up and wash your forearms whilst washing your hands. Keep finger nails short and remove jewellery and watches as they can harbour dirt and bacteria. Cover up any broken skin, burns, cuts and abrasions before handling food. If necessary wear disposable gloves.

NB Gloves must be kept clean (including the inside), they can aggravate existing skin conditions and some types (e.g. powdered latex) can cause allergic reactions. There are several types of food safe gloves.

Alcohol gels must not be used as a substitute for effective hand washing with antibacterial soap and hot water

Remember the difference between a hand towel (used for drying hands) and a tea towel (used for drying crockery and cutlery). Where possible use disposable kitchen towels to dry hands, surfaces and equipment to avoid cross contamination.

Cross-contamination

Cross-contamination happens when harmful bacteria are spread onto food from surfaces, hands, equipment and other food. Raw animal products are likely to be a source of harmful bacteria and should be kept separate from cooked and ready-to-eat foods.

You need to protect food from **physical** contamination (foreign objects), **chemical** contaminations (cleaning or pest control products) and **microbial** contamination (bacteria, moulds and viruses).

Personal Hygiene

High standards of personal hygiene are vital in order to prevent food contamination. Food handlers should wash their hands before and after handling different types of food, after touching their face, coughing or sneezing and as often as possible at other times (see hand washing page). Food handlers should avoid eating or drinking whilst working. Children are less likely to have good personal hygiene skills.

Protective clothing

This should protect food from contamination by food handlers and must not be a source of contamination in its own right. Anyone handling food should tie back their hair, remove jewellery and watches. There should be somewhere for people to change into their work clothes or alternatively ensure staff (and visitors) wear aprons. Protective clothing must be regularly washed. Alternatively disposable aprons can be used.

Fitness for Work and Sickness Procedures

Anyone suffering from or carrying an illness which could be spread through food should not work. Anyone suffering sickness, diarrhoea or vomiting should be excluded from work until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped. Cuts and sores must be covered with a clean waterproof plaster. All staff must be aware of the sickness policy. If someone else in the household is unwell then similar precautions should be taken for those people.

Cloths - the main cause of cross contamination

Use single-use cloths or kitchen towels if possible and then throw them away. Use a clean cloth to wipe any surfaces, equipment and utensils which come into contact with ready-to-eat foods. Use different cloths for different jobs. Wash reusable cloths using a machine hot wash particularly if they have been in contact with any raw food. Remove any food debris from work surfaces with a detergent before rinsing and then disinfecting.

Packaging and wrapping materials

Keep them clean and free from contamination. Don't store them on the floor where they can easily be contaminated by dampness, spillages and debris. Use food grade, washable and durable packaging for storing food in cupboards, fridges and freezers.

Storage

- Make sure your fridge is clean and tidy; keep food sealed and storage areas clean to avoid cross contamination. If possible use separate fridges and storage areas for cooked and raw foods.
- Store ready-to-eat foods above raw meat in the fridge. Cover food and avoid over stocking your fridge/freezer as this will reduce its efficiency.
- A food business cannot use, sell or keep food beyond its "use by date" (which isn't the same as a "best before date"). Maintain good stock rotation and label opened foods with a use-by date according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Good stock control can increase the viability of your business as it can reduce waste and prevent ingredients from deteriorating in quality.
- Avoid reheating or defrosting foods more than once as these processes can provide optimum conditions for bacterial growth.
- Defrost food by putting it in the fridge the night before. This ensures a low temperature is maintained. Reheated foods need to be piping hot all the way through.
- Preheat ovens and follow microwaving instruction carefully.
- If reheating, hot holding and microwaving are common practice in your food business then please refer to the "Cooking" section of the Safe Foods Better Business Pack.

Eggs can be a source of salmonella and the shells are porous so must be kept dry. Treat eggs as a raw animal product and store them separately in the fridge in a dry clean container. Lion Quality eggs are produced to the British Egg Industry Council standards which meet all the hygiene standards of EU and UK law. Individual eggs should be stamped with a "best before date". Eggs shouldn't be used if they are dirty or cracked. Do not re-use leftover egg mixes or products.



Cleaning Schedule

A cleaning schedule describes how and when a food preparation area should be cleaned, the chemicals that should be used and who is responsible for each task. It helps to ensure that tasks aren't overlooked and highlights when larger tasks may be required (e.g. when the extractor fans are due to be cleaned).

Daily, weekly and monthly cleaning tasks can be included in the schedule. Include the disinfection of equipment and surfaces in your opening checks to ensure that food preparation areas are cleaned properly after household tasks.

“Clear and clean as you go”

The important surfaces to keep clean are those in direct contact with food (work surfaces, chopping boards, mincing or mixing equipment) particularly those used for high risk foods.

Read the label

- What does the chemical do (detergent, degreaser or disinfectant)?
- Does the chemical need to be left on the surface in order for it to be effective (contact time)?
- Does the chemical need to be diluted?
- Is the chemical hazardous (irritant, corrosive, toxic or harmful)?
- Are there any special safety requirements (ventilation or protective gloves)?

Cleaning Method

Firstly remove all visible food particles from surfaces

1. **APPLICATION OF DETERGENT** – breaks down fats and oils and makes it easier to remove dirt from a surface.

2. **SCRUBBING** – mechanically removes the dirt

3. **HEAT** – hot water softens oils and fats and activates the chemicals in the detergents to help rinse dirt and grease away from surfaces. Wear rubber gloves if you are washing food preparation equipment by hand so that the water can be as hot as possible without causing scalds and burns.

4. **RINSE** – removes the dirty soapy water.

5. **DISINFECTION** – surfaces must be clear of food debris and dirt before they can be disinfected. Food contact surfaces can be disinfected using food grade sanitisers which unlike other disinfectants are not harmful if accidentally ingested in small quantities. All chemicals must be handled carefully to ensure they do not contaminate food. In order to effectively remove germs a disinfectant/sanitiser must be used in the correct concentration; some chemicals will need to be rinsed away; and others will need to remain in contact with the surface – FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS

6. **DRYING** – if the instructions tell you to dry the surface then use a disposable cloth to prevent recontamination.

7. **DISPOSAL** – do not pour dirty water into kitchen sinks. Use an outside waste water gully.

Make sure anything washed in a dishwasher or washing machine is washed on a hot cycle using appropriate chemicals in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



Documentation

A Food Business Operator must keep some records which help to show that food supplied to customers is safe. You only need to keep documents and records which are proportionate to the size of your business so you will find it helpful to separate the operation of your business from general household activities. If you have any doubt about the safety of any food then you must not use it.

Temperature control records

- Keep an appropriate thermometer in the fridge to check that the temperature is within a safe range (0°C - 8°C).
- Do not rely on display temperatures as they are not always accurate.
- Check the accuracy of a probe thermometer by placing it into boiling water (100°C) and melting ice (0 -1°C).
- Check the temperature of any fridges and freezers used for the storage of food connected with your business. Keep a record of the checks.
- If the temperature is not correct, adjust the thermostat of the fridge, defrost the freezer if necessary and ensure that storage areas are not overloaded.

Traceability

- You must keep a record of where the food you handle comes from and where it goes.

- Effective traceability can help to identify and retrieve any unsafe food from your customers.
- It is also used by manufacturers to recall food which might have been labelled with incorrect or misleading information.
- You must keep a record of your suppliers and of the events to which you supply food. The easiest way to do this is to keep all your invoices and receipts in one place.

Pest control checks

- You may not have noticed any pest problems but because you run a food business from home you will need to check the premises from time to time
- Set yourself reminders for pest control checks and contractors' visits and make a record of any evidence of pest activity.
- Keep a pest contactor's details in your diary.
- Check deliveries for evidence of damage by pests.
- Check premises for evidence of pests e.g. gnawed packaging, droppings behind cupboards.



Opening and closing checks

Opening and Closing checks

- You must keep some documented procedures which show how you produce safe food. Examples include cleaning schedules, checking use-by dates and temperature checks.
- Human error is reduced if you have a checklist to remind you about the nature and frequency of each task.
- Work surfaces must be cleaned and sanitised before and after food preparation.
- If things go wrong, make a note in your diary and describe what you did to rectify the situation and to prevent a recurrence.

When your checklists, diary and cleaning schedules are in place it will be easier to keep your records up to date.

Packaging

Be careful if you are using food packaging for storing leftovers. Use packaging which is food grade and fit for the purpose e.g. microwavable or re-usable.

Some types of plastics can release chemicals if used inappropriately. Food should not be left in opened tins as the contents can react with the lining of the tin.

Labelling

Many pre-packed and wrapped foods must contain specific information on the labels. For more information about labelling see the trading standards website at www.tradingstandards.gov.uk or contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06.

Allergens

Many people suffer from food intolerances but some foods and ingredients are known to be capable of causing severe allergic reactions and food products must be labelled accordingly. These include nuts, eggs, milk, some shellfish and fish, sesame seeds, cereals containing gluten (wheat, rye, barley and oats), soya, celery, mustard and sulphites/sulphur dioxide (a preservative). If you produce food which might contain one of these allergens then you must declare it on the label using the words "may contain X". If you claim something to be allergen free then you must have rigorous controls in place to prevent contamination with the allergen in question.



Maintenance

- Structural damage can make your premises more difficult to keep clean, allow entry by pests, encourage mould growth or prevent adequate ventilation. Peeling paint, broken glass and chipped plaster board can be sources of physical contamination.
- Equipment only works effectively when it is cleaned and maintained. Check that extractor fans, fridges and other electrical appliances are working properly and kept clean and free of dust and grease.
- Replace worn and pitted chopping boards, cloths and cleaning tools as they harbour bacteria if they cannot be easily cleaned.
- Repair or replace any defective or broken equipment in order to prevent physical contamination.
- Make sure fridges and other pieces of equipment (e.g. probes and ovens) are working properly and check that temperatures are within the correct range. Keep chilled food items at 0-5°C and frozen items below minus 18°C. Fridge seals are a common location for mould growth.
- Floor surfaces should be maintained so they can be easily cleaned and also to prevent health and safety hazards such as slips and trips.

Pest Control

Pests include insects, birds or rodents. Rodents are incontinent and are a serious threat to food hygiene. Birds can drop feathers, faeces and dust debris into food or onto surfaces. Insects contaminate food with their larvae, bodies and faeces.

- Check premises and deliveries for signs of pests – gnawed packaging, droppings.
- Keep lids on bins and keep external areas tidy to prevent pests from sheltering nearby.
- Keep food covered, in pest-proof containers and remember even dried foods can attract pests.
- If you produce large quantities of refuse and waste food make sure you have adequate storage and collection arrangements to avoid accumulations of rubbish.
- Keep pest control equipment and chemicals away from food preparation areas.
- If flies are a problem, keep windows closed and if necessary install an “insect-o-cutor”.
- Keep a pest control contractor’s details handy in case you find evidence of pests.
- If you have a persistent problem with pests contact a pest control contractor to help you manage the problem.
- Pets must also be kept out of food preparation areas.



Food Hygiene Checklist

Cross contamination

- Do you store ready-to-eat foods separately from raw foods in your fridges and freezers?
- Have separated commercial and domestic food storage, preparation and cooking areas?
- Are you cleaning and washing your hands effectively?
- Are you treating eggs as a raw animal product?
- Are your premises free of pests?

Cleaning - "Clean as you go"

- Can all structural and equipment surfaces in food handling areas be cleaned effectively?
- Are disinfectants used correctly?
- Are opening and closing checks completed daily (or each time the kitchen is used for commercial food production)?
- Do you have a cleaning schedule or diary to remind you when deep cleaning is due?

Hand washing

- Are you aware of correct hand washing techniques?
- Do you have antibacterial soap and hand towels for hand washing?
- Do you wash your hands often enough during food preparation?

Traceability

- Do you keep records and receipts for the ingredients that you use?
- Do you buy eggs from a reputable source?
- Do you buy any ingredients or decorations from outside of the European Union? If you do then there may be additional legal requirements.
- Do you keep receipts or records for the food that you sell, particularly if you are supplying events?
- Are you required to label food?

Storage

- Are food storage areas protected against entry by food pests?
- Is food stored at appropriate temperatures?
- Do you keep ready-to-eat foods separate from high risk raw food products?

Documentation

This could be a simple diary to record the following:

- A list of suppliers;
- A checklist of opening and closing checks with reference to your cleaning schedule;
- Temperature records for your commercial fridges and freezers;
- A list of useful contacts and records of repairs, maintenance and pest control incidents.

If you are still unsure about the food hygiene requirements which relate to your business the Food Standards Agency's Safer Food Better Business Pack is free to download at www.food.gov.uk or call 0845 606 0667.

If you find it difficult to follow the advice in this leaflet then you may need to complete a structured food hygiene training course such as the Level 2 Food Safety for Caterers. Many courses are available locally or online.

If you are unable to comply with basic legal requirements because of the nature and layout of your house or the competing demands of your family then you must be prepared to find alternative premises. The advice is "if you can't do it safely – don't do it at all."

What should I do now?

Making cakes is not normally a high risk food preparation activity and if you follow the advice in this leaflet then you will be able to do so safely and in a way which complies with general food hygiene requirements. The council is not expected to carry out inspections of low risk businesses and therefore it is unlikely that one of our officers will visit you at home unless we receive a complaint.

However we are expected to have arrangements in place that will alert us to new food businesses and to changes in existing businesses that may increase the risk and make an inspection necessary. Provided your business remains relatively small and is confined to simple cakes and sugar-based products then the risk is unlikely to change but there are some circumstances which may increase the risk and mean that your business would need to be included in our programme of inspections.

Here are some examples of changes which may require us to include your business in our programme of inspections.

Please notify us if they apply to you:

1. You are asked to supply food for sale by other businesses in addition to or instead of supplying directly to the final customer, friends and/or family;
2. Your business grows and diversifies and you begin to handle higher risk ready-to-eat foods which contain raw egg, fresh cream or other perishable ingredients;
3. You are asked to "sub-contract" some of your business to other people, the suitability of whose premises can't be guaranteed;
4. You are asked to supply food to businesses that serve "vulnerable groups"; these include children's nurseries or premises that provide care for the elderly.

This is not an exhaustive list so if you are in any doubt, please contact our office for further information.

If you sell or transfer the business to someone else or you make significant changes to the nature of the food business you must notify us within 28 days.

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